

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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RECEIVED BY
AND WILDLIFE SE
GRIZZLY BEAR REC
COORDINATORS OFFICE

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Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS
P.O.Box 5127
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Project Coordinator:

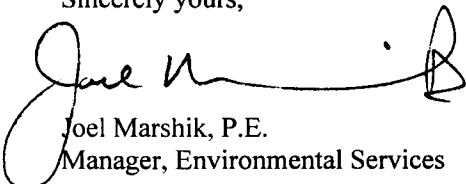
I have a one comment about what I consider a deficiency in the Draft regarding connected actions and direct effects to Montana Department of Transportation's highway system. My comment is in regard to linkage zones and their future importance.

Within the Draft linkage zones are given minimal discussion. I understand this is based on the fact that linkage zone analysis is a separate project, a project that is independent of this grizzly bear recovery project. I don't doubt that this is the intent of the authors. But, given the fact that only one alternative does not predict some grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot, I believe, with that one exception, a direct impact will be the need for wildlife crossing structures on as yet to be determined locations. And I believe this direct effect should be part of this analysis and not part of a separate analysis on linkage zones. My logic is based on my experience with our EIS for Evaro-Polson. Just the potential for grizzly bears in the Bitterroot was enough for the public to insist upon inclusion of some structure to facilitate grizzly bear crossings at Evaro Hill. As soon as the linkage zone analysis is complete, if not before, I know I will receive requests for MDT to consider crossing structures.

1 I would like to see your FEIS include some statements to the fact that linkage zones over time will be established to tie the various ecosystems together. This discussion should include some recommendations regarding necessary land use changes and all other changes necessary to make linkage zones function, including crossing of major transportation corridors and associated structures. These structures vary in cost depending on type, topography and land ownership. But, no matter what they cost, they will impact MDT's program and that fact needs to be included in this EIS. I also think it is important to mention the need for linkage zones for grizzly bear genetic vitality and for all other wildlife. If I am wrong assuming the need for structures to support linkage zones, some statement to this fact in the FEIS would also be important. It would establish in the record that the intent of grizzly bear recovery is to have no direct effect to highway construction costs.

In closing, I would like to see the FEIS recognize the fact that grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem will bring more recognition to the importance of linkage zones as a connected action. A direct effect of this recognition will be impacts to MDT's programs by increasing the need for wildlife crossing structures on our highways.

Sincerely yours,


Joel Marshik, P.E.
Manager, Environmental Services

cc: Lynn Zanto